

April 4, 2019

Mick Mulvaney
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Office of Management and Budget
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Director Mulvaney:

At a rally in Michigan on March 28th, President Trump vowed to secure \$300 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in Fiscal Year 2020. This promise stands in stark contrast to the President's budget request which – for the second year – proposed to slash funding for the GLRI by 90% compared to FY 2019 funding levels. I write seeking information regarding the decision-making process that has led to a \$270 million discrepancy between the President's stated wishes, the budget proposal issued by his White House and the Environmental Protection Agency, and proposed cuts to the program in previous budgets.

Since it began in 2010, GLRI has been an unequivocal bipartisan success – spurring the restoration of a freshwater system that contains more than 20% of the world's surface fresh water and supplies drinking water for 30 million people. GLRI has become a focal point for coordinating a constellation of actors that includes Canada, eight states, and thousands of communities across the basin. GLRI's first two action plans achieved 72% and 90% of their goals, respectively, and the third plan is in the final stages of development. In the process of completing the first two plans, significant steps were taken to address long-standing pollution including Areas of Concern (AOCs), along Ohio's Black and Cuyahoga Rivers. Three AOCs have been successfully delisted, and three more await official delisting now that all tasks have been completed.

Given GLRI's proven track record of funding environmental victories, it is apparent to me and a bipartisan majority in Congress that this worthwhile program deserves continued funding. In that regard, as the FY 2020 budget was prepared;

- 1) Did EPA initially propose eliminating or dramatically cutting funding for the GLRI from the FY 2019 enacted level?
 - a. If so, what was the stated rationale?
- 2) If EPA did not propose cutting the program in its initial budget submission to OMB, what was OMB's rationale for submitting, on the President's behalf, a budget that cut the program by 90%?

- 3) Will there be an addendum to the Administration's FY 2020 budget request to support full funding for the GLRI?

A thriving Great Lakes ecosystem provides more than clean water and wildlife habitat – it provides an economic engine for surrounding communities. Economic impact studies conducted by the Great Lakes Commission have shown that GLRI funds achieve a return of \$3.35 for every dollar invested and that homeowners in areas receiving GLRI funding enjoy a \$.08 increase in home values for every dollar invested.

I appreciate your thoughtful response to my requests, and I hope that this serves as a wakeup call for this Administration that protecting the Great Lake must remain a national priority.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown

United States Senator